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“There’s Research on That!” (<http://thesocietypages.org/trot>)

Drought and Social Division (<http://thesocietypages.org/trot/2015/04/21/drought-and-social-division/>)

Evan Stewart and Rebecca Farnum on April 21, 2015

California is facing record drought, water restrictions (<http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21647994-why-golden-state-so-bad-managing-water-price-wrong>), and threats of wildfires (<http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/19/us/california-wildfire-riverside-highway/>). The solution seems simple—just find more water through increased pumping (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/04/19/california-drought-water-climate-change-salmon-smelt-editorials-debates/26043985/>) or desalination (<http://www.dailynews.com/opinion/20150330/desalination-looks-better-as-water-prices-rise-thomas-elias>)—but these quick fixes ignore deeper questions about how we turn public necessities into commodities and determine who can lay claim to natural resources. These issues can lead to cultural conflict, but struggles for water can also renew solidarity across different social groups.

Sociological case studies remind us that professional environmental responsibilities to the land, its residents, owners, and governments change over time and through particular institutional cultures. Power and inequality shape who is exposed to environmental problems and how we address solutions.

Wendy N. Espeland. (<http://www.sociology.northwestern.edu/people/faculty/wendy-espeland.html>) 1998. *The Struggle for Water: Politics, Rationality, and Identity in the American Southwest* (<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/S/bo3644936.html>). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

David N. Pellow (https://www.soc.umn.edu/people/pellow_d.html) and Hollie Nyseth Brehm (<https://sociology.osu.edu/people/brehm.84>). 2013. “An Environmental Sociology for the Twenty-First Century. (<http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev-soc-071312-145558>)” *Annual Review of Sociology* 39:229-250.

Water conflicts also bring up commodification—the way we turn public necessities like water and health into market goods. Research on commodification examines everything from how the water industry actively competes with the tap to how insurance markets change the culture of life and death in the United States.

Viviana A. Zelizer. (<https://sociology.princeton.edu/faculty/viviana-a-zelizer>) 1978. "Human Values and the Market: The Case of Life Insurance and Death in 19th-Century America (http://www.jstor.org/stable/2778256?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).” *American Journal of Sociology* 84(3):591-610

Daniel Jaffee (<https://www.pdx.edu/sociology/daniel-jaffee>) and Soren Newman. 2012. "A Bottle Half Empty: Bottled Water, Commodification, and Contestation. (<http://www.pdx.edu/sociology/sites/www.pdx.edu.sociology/files/O%2BE%202013-Jaffee%20Newman-Bottle%20Half%20Empty-Final.pdf>)” *Organization and Environment*. 26(3): 318-335.

Water resources—even when scarce—do not inevitably lead to conflict. Environmental concern is not only high in affluent nations; even in places as tense as the Middle East, local activists regularly use the environment to bridge cultural, political, and religious tensions.

Riley E. Dunlap (<http://sociology.okstate.edu/component/content/?id=136>) and Richard York. (<http://sociology.uoregon.edu/profile/rfyork/>) 2008. "The Globalization of Environmental Concern and the Limits of the Postmaterialist Values Explanation: Evidence from Four Multinational Surveys. (http://www.jstor.org/stable/40220082?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)” *The Sociological Quarterly* 49(3):529-563.

Nicole Harari (<https://www.cde.unibe.ch/Pages/Person/1477/Nicole-Harari.aspx>) and Jesse Roseman. 2008. "Environmental Peacebuilding Theory and Practice (http://foeme.org/uploads/publications_publ93_1.pdf).” *Eco Peace Middle East*.

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